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Canada
Statistics
City index numbers of retail
food prices.
1935-40.



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CANADA
DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND COMMERCE
DOMINION BUREAU OF STATISTICS
INTERNAL TRADE BRANCH

CITY INDEX NUMBERS

OF

RETAIL FOOD PRICES

Special Reports - Cost of Living.

1935 - 1940

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INTERNAL TRADE BRANCH

Dominion Statistician:	R. H. Coats, LL.D., F.R.S.C., F.S.S. (Hon.)
Chief, Internal Trade Branch:	Herbert Marshall, B.A., F.S.S.
Prices Statistician:	H. F. Greenway, M.A.

RETAIL FOOD PRICES, AUGUST, 1939 TO DECEMBER, 1940.

In September and October, 1939, retail food prices rose abruptly in all parts of Canada. From November 1939 until September 1940, city retail food price indexes either showed very little change or declined moderately. In the final quarter of 1940 retail food price averages turned upward again rather sharply.

The net result of changes between August 1939 and December 1940 may be observed in the following percentage increases recorded for 8 city indexes: Halifax 15.2 p.c., Saint John 12.4 p.c., Montreal 10.5 p.c., Toronto 7.6 p.c., Winnipeg 10.2 p.c., Saskatoon 12.1 p.c., Edmonton 9.8 p.c., and Vancouver 9.1 p.c. Increases in the two Maritime cities have been materially above average, and the Toronto increase somewhat less than average. Otherwise the advances were closely grouped around 10 p.c.

Apart from the actual increases recorded, the most significant feature of the city indexes has been the amount of scatter in their levels relative to 1935-1939 base period averages. In August 1939, indexes for the eight cities were between 100.5 (Saint John) and 97.9 (Saskatoon), a range of 2.6 points. The sharp increase in prices during September and October was accompanied by a widening of this range to 5.2 points (Montreal 109.4 and Vancouver 104.2), and during 1940 it reached 8.1 points.

Throughout the period August 1939-December 1940, none of the individual city indexes differed from the Dominion average index by as much as 7 p.c. If Halifax were excluded the maximum difference would never have reached 5 p.c., and presumably differences in complete cost of living indexes would have been still less.

NEW RETAIL FOOD PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR 8 CITIES

The preceding comments have been based upon newly constructed index numbers of retail prices for foods in 8 cities which are of outstanding importance as distributing centres. These indexes mark the first stage in a programme of regional cost of living indexes. The cities selected for this purpose were Halifax, Saint John, Montreal, Toronto, Saskatoon, Edmonton, and Vancouver. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics collected records of family food purchases in these cities during 1938 and 1939 to form a basis for calculating representative family food budgets. The list of foods in the indexes is the same for all cities, but the food budget quantities reflect differences in the purchasing habits of typical wage-earner families in each of the 8 cities.

Interest in the differences in regional behaviour of prices has prompted the publication of these indexes before the complete cost of living indexes for the eight cities are available. Food prices usually show wider fluctuations than prices of other goods and services entering into the average family budget. Their reaction to unusual conditions affecting general price movements is likely to be more pronounced than the average of all items in the family budget.

Retail food price index numbers for the 8 cities noted above may be found in the first table following for the years 1935 to 1940 inclusive. For subsequent months these indexes will appear in the Bureau's monthly bulletin "Prices and Price Indexes" until further notice.

COMMENTS UPON FOOD QUANTITIES USED IN CALCULATING CITY RETAIL PRICE INDEXES

Amounts shown in the table on page 4 represent weekly average purchases for a family of 4.6 persons. Purchase records in the fall of 1938, and winter and summer periods of 1939 were averaged for this purpose. Brief comments upon regional differences in family food purchases have been based upon the table shown on page 4.

Beef purchases far outweighed those of other meats. Amounts of beef and veal purchased per family tended to increase gradually from east to west as far as Edmonton, and then dropped moderately for Vancouver. Almost the exact opposite was true for lamb. Bacon purchases were highest in Toronto.

Family milk purchases were below average in the maritime cities, and highest in the western cities. Maritime cheese purchases were also low, with city averages in central and western Canada about equal. Family purchases of eggs and butter were generally similar in all regions, although western city averages were slightly above those for the east.

There was generally a converse relationship between bread and flour purchases. Cities with high bread averages such as Montreal, showed comparatively low amounts for flour. Rolled oats was less popular in Montreal and Toronto than elsewhere. Canned tomatoes, on the other hand, were brought in unusually large quantities in Montreal, and potato purchases in Montreal and the Maritime cities were also high.

Purchases of jam, marmalade, etc., were much higher in Prairie cities than elsewhere.

INDEX NUMBERS OF RETAIL FOOD PRICES FOR EIGHT CITIES IN CANADA, 1935 - 1940.

1935-1939 = 100.

	Halifax	Saint John	Montreal	Toronto	Winnipeg	Saskatoon	Edmonton	Vancouver
1935 -								
January	98.7	91.7	91.4	93.7	92.4	93.3	95.1	87.8
February	96.4	92.1	92.3	92.8	95.0	95.1	96.4	91.8
March	98.0	92.7	93.3	94.6	95.4	96.6	96.0	91.2
April	93.9	91.5	90.7	93.1	94.0	92.6	94.7	91.2
May	94.1	89.4	90.6	93.6	94.6	93.3	94.2	93.2
June	95.0	90.3	91.7	93.2	94.6	92.4	94.9	93.1
July	94.4	89.9	92.7	93.4	95.0	91.4	95.4	92.6
August	97.2	97.1	92.0	93.5	94.4	94.0	96.8	95.1
September	97.2	96.2	92.1	94.9	94.8	91.3	95.5	94.9
October	99.1	96.5	95.3	97.2	94.5	93.0	96.3	95.8
November	101.9	99.7	96.9	99.8	95.6	94.4	99.0	98.5
December	101.3	101.2	97.7	99.5	98.9	97.0	101.5	97.2
YEAR	97.3	94.0	93.1	94.9	94.9	93.7	96.3	93.5
1936 -								
January	101.1	101.7	99.1	100.2	97.9	96.8	99.1	96.6
February	99.2	99.4	97.7	97.2	96.6	95.5	97.0	94.1
March	99.4	98.9	97.4	97.8	97.6	100.5	101.5	97.3
April	95.9	97.0	93.7	94.9	93.0	92.0	94.4	93.2
May	94.9	97.1	94.2	94.8	93.7	91.0	93.5	94.2
June	95.6	97.4	95.8	95.3	91.2	89.8	93.2	94.3
July	96.4	98.8	97.1	96.8	93.6	91.9	94.7	97.5
August	97.9	98.2	96.8	101.0	98.1	95.0	95.6	97.0
September	97.3	97.0	96.9	100.8	100.6	97.2	97.2	101.9
October	98.0	98.1	98.1	98.3	97.1	94.7	97.2	100.7
November	100.8	100.7	99.6	100.5	98.7	96.5	100.7	100.2
December	101.6	103.6	100.0	100.6	101.6	100.9	101.6	100.2
YEAR	98.2	99.0	97.2	98.2	96.6	95.1	96.9	97.2
1937 -								
January	100.2	100.9	98.9	100.0	101.4	103.6	101.9	99.8
February	100.6	100.8	99.0	100.6	101.8	105.6	101.1	102.9
March	98.8	98.9	98.0	100.7	99.2	104.8	102.8	102.8
April	99.9	99.8	98.4	100.3	101.4	103.4	102.1	103.4
May	99.1	100.2	98.3	101.1	101.5	103.2	104.4	105.9
June	99.1	98.8	97.5	102.2	102.1	103.0	103.3	104.8
July	101.6	100.4	101.6	102.4	103.2	102.6	104.1	104.4
August	104.8	103.3	102.2	105.5	103.3	103.2	106.3	106.2
September	102.0	103.1	101.9	103.0	102.7	102.0	104.8	108.8
October	103.2	103.1	104.2	104.8	101.6	104.4	103.8	108.4
November	105.8	105.1	104.5	104.4	103.2	106.7	105.5	108.9
December	104.9	106.0	104.6	106.1	104.4	109.5	106.3	107.5
YEAR	101.7	101.7	100.8	102.6	102.1	104.3	101.3	105.3

INDEX NUMBERS OF RETAIL FOOD PRICES FOR EIGHT CITIES IN CANADA, 1935 - 1940.

1935-1940 = 100.

	Halifax	Saint John	Montreal	Toronto	Winnipeg	Saskatoon	Edmonton	Vancouver
1938 -								
January	103.1	104.6	105.1	104.6	104.2	103.3	104.9	104.9
February	102.9	104.1	105.9	103.8	103.3	108.4	103.1	104.4
March	104.0	105.9	107.4	105.7	105.8	110.4	103.0	105.7
April	104.3	105.6	107.4	105.6	105.4	110.7	105.0	107.1
May	100.5	102.7	105.3	102.5	102.4	106.1	101.7	105.5
June	100.9	102.9	107.2	102.7	103.9	106.9	103.8	105.6
July	105.8	103.6	108.9	103.5	104.3	104.4	103.4	107.4
August	106.8	106.0	106.7	104.5	105.4	104.4	104.8	106.0
September	102.8	102.7	102.8	101.2	100.5	101.9	101.7	103.8
October	102.2	102.0	104.4	101.1	103.2	101.9	101.7	102.0
November	103.7	101.9	103.6	100.8	100.4	101.8	101.9	101.8
December	101.0	101.9	104.3	100.8	101.2	101.2	101.2	98.6
YEAR	103.2	103.7	105.8	103.1	103.3	105.5	103.3	104.4
1939 -								
January	100.2	99.6	104.1	100.3	103.4	102.1	100.0	98.0
February	98.7	99.7	103.0	99.1	102.3	99.3	98.6	96.0
March	98.0	98.9	103.0	98.8	101.9	101.2	98.8	97.0
April	94.1	99.3	100.4	98.7	102.2	98.4	98.8	96.4
May	97.1	100.1	101.3	97.8	100.0	96.0	97.8	97.9
June	97.0	98.0	100.0	98.2	98.8	96.1	98.6	96.8
July	98.3	99.7	101.5	101.7	100.6	97.6	99.5	98.2
August	99.6	100.5	100.6	100.2	100.6	97.9	100.3	98.1
September	97.4	100.0	99.7	99.0	100.7	97.4	100.0	97.4
October	106.2	106.9	109.4	106.7	108.2	108.3	108.5	104.2
November	107.9	107.5	109.3	106.7	107.8	109.2	111.9	104.9
December	106.1	108.4	107.9	106.4	106.9	109.1	109.4	103.9
YEAR	100.1	101.5	103.3	101.1	102.8	101.0	101.8	99.1
1940 -								
January	108.5	107.5	107.3	103.6	106.5	107.3	107.2	101.4
February	106.4	106.6	107.1	103.8	106.2	107.4	107.1	104.1
March	107.1	105.8	107.9	102.9	106.0	106.7	106.2	103.0
April	107.7	106.7	107.7	104.2	106.2	106.7	107.1	103.9
May	108.4	107.4	106.0	103.2	105.3	104.9	108.2	105.3
June	106.1	106.1	106.0	103.7	105.2	103.3	106.6	102.5
July	110.6	108.1	108.2	104.9	109.0	105.9	105.8	103.2
August	111.9	108.9	106.1	104.7	108.5	103.8	104.8	103.9
September	111.3	107.0	106.9	105.9	106.8	103.4	103.5	103.4
October	111.6	108.4	107.9	106.1	107.6	104.3	105.4	103.7
November	113.3	111.3	110.9	108.5	110.2	107.5	108.4	106.1
December	114.7	113.0	111.2	107.8	110.9	109.7	110.1	107.0
YEAR	109.8	108.0	107.8	105.0	107.3	105.8	106.7	104.0

FOOD WEIGHTS FOR RETAIL PRICE INDEX NUMBERS OF SPECIFIED CITIES
(AVERAGE PURCHASES PER WEEK FOR FAMILY OF 4.6 PERSONS).

		Halifax	Saint John	Montreal	Toronto	Winnipeg	Saskatoon	Edmonton	Vancouver
Milk	qt.	9.2	10.4	9.8	10.4	12.3	11.7	11.4	10.9
Butter	lb.	2.4	2.7	2.8	2.6	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.0
Cheese	lb.	.2	.2	.3	.5	.4	.5	.4	.5
Eggs	doz.	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.7	1.6	1.7	1.8
Sirloin Steak	lb.	.4	.4	.5	.5	.5	.5	.6	.5
Round Steak	lb.	.7	.8	.9	.9	1.0	.9	1.1	.9
Rolled Rib Roast	lb.	.6	.7	.7	.7	.8	.7	.9	.7
Blade Roast	lb.	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.1
Stewing Beef	lb.	.8	.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.0
Veal	lb.	.2	.5	1.6	.5	1.3	1.0	.9	.7
Lamb	lb.	.8	.5	.5	.7	.5	.4	.4	.8
Pork, Fresh Loins	lb.	1.1	1.3	2.3	1.0	.8	.5	.7	.7
Pork, Fresh Shoulder	lb.	.8	.8	1.5	.6	.5	.3	.4	.4
Bacon	lb.	.7	.6	.5	.9	.7	.7	.7	.7
Canned Salmon	lb.tin	.1	.1	.2	.2	.2	.2	.1	.1
Lard	lb.	.1	.2	.3	.1	.2	.2	.4	.2
Vegetable Shortening	lb.	.7	.9	.6	.6	1.0	.6	.5	.7
Finnan Haddie	lb.	.2	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1
Bread	lb.	9.0	10.1	12.8	11.9	13.1	10.5	10.6	10.9
Flour	lb.	3.6	4.8	2.2	2.5	4.3	4.1	3.4	4.2
Rice	lb.	.1	.1	.4	.2	.2	.1	.2	.2
Rolled Oats	lb.	.6	.7	.4	.4	.8	.7	.8	.7
Corn Flakes	8 oz.pkg.	1.4	1.8	1.0	1.8	1.0	1.5	1.1	1.1
Granulated Sugar	lb.	4.4	4.7	4.1	3.8	5.4	4.7	5.4	4.8
Yellow Sugar	lb.	.7	1.2	.4	.7	.8	.6	.5	.5
Tea	lb.	.4	.4	.3	.5	.4	.4	.4	.5
Coffee	lb.	.1	.2	.3	.2	.3	.2	.2	.2
Cocoa	$\frac{1}{2}$ lb.tin	.1	.2	.1	.2	.2	.2	.2	.2
Salt	lb.	.5	.7	.5	.4	.6	.4	.4	.5
Beans, dry	lb.	.3	.4	.2	.2	.1	.1	.1	.1
Onions	lb.	.7	.9	.8	1.0	.7	.5	.7	.9
Potatoes	pk.	.9	1.0	1.0	.8	.8	.7	.8	.8
Canned Tomatoes	2 $\frac{1}{2}$'s tin	.3	.4	.9	.4	.4	.5	.6	.4
Canned Peas	16 oz.tin	.7	.7	.5	.9	.8	.7	.7	.6
Canned Corn	16 oz.tin	.3	.3	.4	.4	.4	.4	.4	.3
Canned Beans	16 oz.tin	.9	.7	.6	.4	.5	.4	.5	.4
Raisins	lb.	.2	.2	.1	.2	.3	.2	.2	.2
Currants	lb.	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1
Prunes	lb.	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1
Bananas	lb.	.9	.6	1.4	1.3	1.0	1.1	.6	.9
Oranges	doz.	.6	.5	.7	.8	1.0	.9	.8	.9
Lemons	doz.	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1
Strawberry Jam	lb.	.1	.1	.5	.6	.7	.8	.7	.7
Marmalade	lb.	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1
Canned Peaches	16 oz.tin	.3	.2	.1	.3	.2	.1	.2	.2
Corn Syrup	5 lb.tin	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1

